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GOD SOVEREIGN,
AND MAN FREE.

A DISCOURSE.

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GOD SOVEREIGN, AND MAN FREE.

"The wrath of man shall praise thee : the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."—Psalm 76 : 10.

Our happiness and sense of security depends of necessity upon our faith in God—his wisdom, knowledge, power, goodness, truth righteousness and love.

We must believe in these as active perfections ; as attributes revealed in nature and working in providence. Without such faith in God, his perfections and providence, man must feel insecure and unhappy.

We feel our own dependence, our own helplessness, our own sin, sorrow and guilt. We dare not trust in our own strength for security, in our own wisdom for direction, nor in our own righteousness for justification. Then to whom shall we go—in whom shall we trust in the hour of trial, danger and peril, if not in God and his ever watchful and all controlling providence ! We know that our fellow-men are ignorant, weak and wicked. They know not what to do for us, and if they did know what to do for us, they have not the power to perform it ; and even if they had the wisdom to plan, and the power to execute, they have not the disposition to exercise these powers for our good. Human strength is weakness, human might is feebleness, human wisdom is ignorance, human constancy is fickleness. How then can we commit ourselves unreservedly to the keeping of our fellow-men ?

There is no safety nor security but in God and his providence. But faith in providence in order to be satisfying must be rational and intelligent. We must know the grounds of it. We must have a reason for it. To present the rational grounds of our faith in God's providence is the design of this discussion.

No theory of providence is either rational or consistent which does not recognize God's sovereignty over man and his actions. Human intelligence is the most tremendous, as well as the most fearful element of power in the universe. It is in the results of its action, as wide as infinity, as enduring as eternity, as high as heaven and as deep as hell. It touches every interest, and runs through all the ramifications and relations of society. It crosses the track of the divine government in a hundred thousand different ways. With these facts before us, it is a self-evident proposition, that if this tremendous element of physical, intellectual and moral power, which is ever and everywhere active, is exempt from the control of God's providence, that practically he has no providence.

The question then which naturally presents itself for our consideration, at this point of the discussion, is this: Is God in his providence sovereign over man and his actions? Does he so govern man as to make his thoughts, volitions, purposes, words, and actions, all subservient to the great central purpose of his providence, and instrumental in the attainment of the great end of his government? These questions I unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative.

The truth of this proposition is evident:

1. From man's absolute dependence upon God. Man is as absolutely dependent upon God as any other part of his creation. This is evident because he is as much a creature of God as any other being in the universe. God is as much the creator of man, in his body, spirit, and soul, as he is of any other creature. He is as much the creator of mind as of matter; and from this it is evident that the one is just as much dependent upon him as the other. As man is as much dependent upon God as any other portion of his material and rational creation, it follows that he can control man—his body and soul, his thoughts and feelings, his purposes and actions, as easily as he can control the warring elements of the material universe. This necessarily results from man's nature, as a derived and dependent being, and from his relation to God as his creator.

This being the case, or this fact being admitted, (and we presume no one will deny it,) it follows that God has control of man, or he has control of nothing—that his providence embraces man, or he has no providence—that he governs man or he does not

govern anything. We must admit that God's government is universal and embraces the realms of both mind and matter, or to be logically consistent, must deny all providence and assume that the universe is without a government and man without a God.

If God is man's creator—if he made man—soul and body, intellect and will, passions and affections, can he not control him? Can he not govern the nature he made? Can he not influence the spirit he gave? Can he not move the heart he created? Can he not subdue and control the will he called into being? Can he not teach and educate the intellect which he produced? Certainly no rational mind can question God's ability, as man's creator, to govern and control him. God could not make a being equal to or greater than himself. An effect cannot be greater than its producing cause. But man to be above the divine control must be greater than God and independent of him. This as a creature he cannot be.

2. God's providence must of necessity be over man as well as other parts of his creation. What security would providence afford to us, if it only saved us from physical evils? If it only protected us from storms and tempests, earthquakes and volcanoes, thunder-bolts and lightning-strokes, poisonous serpents and beasts of prey, and then turn us over defenceless and without protection to the malice, rage, hate and revenge of wicked men and devils? If God's providence can do no more for us than save us from a few physical evils, then we say that for all practical purposes we had as well be without any providence. Nearly all the evils we suffer are brought on us by our fellow men. From whence does war, pestilence and famine come? Principally from man. From whence does poverty, bankruptcy, derangement in business, injury to character, to fortune and fame come? From man. From whence does injustice, oppression, persecution and deception come? From man. From what source do we fear, and at whose hands do we suffer fraud, robbery, murder, rapine and blood? At the hands of men. If providence does not protect us from evil men and the results of their action, it affords us but little protection. But God cannot control physical nature so as to protect us from temporal evils, unless he controls man. Man certainly has very great power over, and very extensive control of the elements and powers of the physical creation. By his

arts, science, commerce, and agriculture, he has changed the face of nature, and called all her elements into his service. Soil, climate, rocks, waters, woods, metals, minerals, rivers, oceans, seas, winds, lightnings, vegetables, animals are all under his control. The only way then in which God can control physical nature so as to protect us from physical evils is to control man.

But most of our blessings come to us through our fellow men. Our food, raiment, homes, education, arts, science, law, government, literature, religion, are all given us by human agency and instrumentality. Now if God does not control man in giving us these blessings, we are indebted to man for them and not to God. They are man's blessings and not God's. We should feel grateful to man for them, and return our thanks to man and not to God. So unless God has control of man, his providence not only fails to protect us from the evils and defend us against the dangers of life, but it fails to bestow upon us the blessings we possess and enjoy.

Even spiritual blessings and divine influence upon the race have come through men. The Bible was given by men. The Saviour came by man's agency. The gospel is preached by men. The church is constituted of men. So unless God controls men, he is shut out from the spiritual as well as the material world. His influence is unfelt, his agency is unknown. God must control men, or actually and practically there is to us no God in the world nor in the church. Thus does the theory that man is exempt from the divine control drive directly to practical atheism.

3. We feel that God can control man, and is sovereign over him in his providence. This is an intuition of our natures. Our sense of security in seasons of danger and circumstances of peril, affords evidence of this. We live among men exposed to their hatred and revenge, and feel secure and safe. Why do we do this? It is because we feel that God is sovereign over man, however we may deny it in our philosophical and theological theories.

We ask God to control men, and this we certainly would not do unless we felt assured that he could do it. When we pray for peace—when we ask Him to prevent war—what do we do but ask him to control men?

When we pray to him to bless our land and nation, to direct those who are in authority over us, to govern in the making of our laws and in the administration of our government, do we not ask God to control the thoughts, purposes, volitions and acts of men? Can what we ask be accomplished without such control? Evidently not. When we thus address God, unless we believe that he can and will thus control men's thoughts, feelings, purposes, passions and actions, we insult him by asking him to do what we believe he has no power to do.

We ask God to control men whenever we ask him to make them better, to make them penitent, to convict them of sin, to convert, to renew, to sanctify them. In this we ask God to exercise over men tremendous control. We ask him to change man's whole nature, to influence his intellect, thoughts, judgment, memory, will, affections, conscience, passions, emotions, habits and acts. Do we really ask God to do this without believing he has the power to do it? Certainly no sane man could thus pray to God without having faith in his ability to do all that he asked him to do. Such a petition without faith in God's ability to answer it, would be an insult to God, mockery before heaven, and religious trifling before the Lord of heaven and earth. Certainly no man of piety could do this.

4. We have the evidence of experience in proof of our proposition, that God can control man. Every man feels conscious of his dependence upon God. The power to live, to think, to feel, to love, to resolve, to determine, to act, comes from God. It is absurd to say that God sustains us, preserves us, keeps us in being, and upholds us from day to day, and then deny that he has power to control us in our purposes and actions.

The entire doctrine of divine influence is based upon God's ability to control men. This divine influence over man's actions, thoughts, feelings, volitions was experienced by the Prophets and Apostles, who wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They thought, felt, willed and acted under divine inspiration. God's spiritual influence controlled intellect, affections and will. If he could thus control one man, then may he thus control all men.

The experience of men who have been awakened, converted, and regenerated, indicates God's power to control men. Their wills have been subdued, their affections elevated, their conscien-

ces quickened, their intellects enlightened and their natures renewed by God. God has control of their entire physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual natures. Their thoughts, desires, ends, aims, objects, purposes, plans, and acts in life are all governed by divine influence. This is evident from experience. Can any one question God's ability to control the actions of men, when it is thus clearly evident from the experience of the whole christian world that he does it? Have not the worst men thus been brought under divine influence, and have been made subject to the divine control? All good men were once in a state of rebellion against God; and the impulse of obedience did not originate with them, but it was produced in their hearts by divine influence. Now if God thus controls the whole christian world, as is evident from experience, why may he not thus control all men? There is nothing in the nature and constitution of good men to make them subject to the divine control, that is not in the nature and constitution of all other men. They were all alike depraved. All have the same physical natures. Then why is divine control possible with some men, while as is assumed by those who oppose us, that such control of other men is an impossibility even with God? To say that some men yield to divine influence does not meet the difficulty. Why do they yield? They do not yield in willing obedience to God, until God works in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure. It is then and not before, that they become willing co-workers with God. God's people are thus made "a willing people in the day of His power."

5. That God has control of the actions of men is evident from historical facts. The result of the conduct of Joseph's brethren in selling him into bondage was purposed by God, and He overruled all the action of the parties, so as to bring about this result. This result stands connected with the preservation of Israel, the perpetuity of the Jews, the rise of the Prophets, the coming of Christ, and the salvation of the world. God brought about this grand and glorious result, and he could only do it by having control of the means necessary for its attainment. These means were the purposes and actions of his brethern, and the other individuals associated with them. God Himself says that while they meant it for evil, He intended it for good. He had a purpose in the whole transaction very different from theirs, and He

so controlled them and their actions, that they were made to work out the great purpose of His Providence, in the preservation of their family and the salvation of the race. This one historical fact is conclusive on this subject, and it is the only one which we have space to present in this work. The Bible however abounds with similar and equally striking facts, with which our readers may easily make themselves acquainted. Conviction must result from a study of this subject.

6. That God has control of men, and over-rules their conduct so as to make them work out His purposes in providence, is evident from the teaching of the Bible. "Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "I form the light and create the darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." "All things work together for good to them that love God: to them who are the called according to His purpose." "Christ is made head over all things to the Church." "In Him we live, move and have our being." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." "He worketh every thing according to the counsel of His own will." "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and He turneth it as the rivers of water; whithersoever He will."—Proverbs 21: 1. "A man's heart divideth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps."—Prov. 16: 9. "Man's goings are of the Lord, how can a man then understand his own way?"—Prov. 20: 24. "I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—Jer. 10: 23. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."—Prov. 16: 1. "The wrath of man shall praise thee and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." "There are many devices in a man's heart nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."—Prov. 19: 21. These passages of Scripture conclusively prove, that God in His Providence, controls man's actions so as to make them subserve his purpose in the salvation of the race.

7. The doctrine taught in this Sermon, is also taught by all the standard writers of the Methodist Church. Benson thus states his opinion on this subject: "Though nations combine themselves and their counsels together, yet he defeats them when he pleases. Thus it passes from the work of creation to the works of providence, and from instances of his power in senseless and

irrational creatures, to his power in overruling the thoughts, wills, and actions of men, whether single or united."—Com. vol. pp. 715.

Arminius states: "Besides this, 1 place in subjection to divine providence, both the free-will and actions of a rational creature, so that nothing can be done without the will of God, not even any of those things which are done in opposition to it."—Works vol. 1, pp. 251.

Wesley states: "And to God all things are possible; he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven, in earth, and in the sea, and all deep places, and we cannot doubt of his exerting all his power, as in sustaining so in governing all he has made. Only he that can do all things, cannot deny himself, he cannot contradict himself. Were it not for this he would destroy all sin with its attendant pain in a moment."—Sermons vol. 2, pp. 102–103.

Again, he states, further: "God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, through the whole compass of his creation, by sustaining all things, * * * without which every thing would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing; by governing all every moment, superintending all he has made; strongly and swiftly influencing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures."—Sermons vol. 2, pp. 412.

"Do not all men know that whatsoever evil befalls them, it befalls them either by God's permission, or by his appointment. And that he designs every evil of this life to warn men to avoid still greater evils. And of every such evil we may say that the Lord hath done it either by his own immediate power, by the strength of his own right hand, or by commanding or else by suffering it to be done by those of his servants that do his pleasure. Not only his blessed angels, but all things serve him in all places of his dominion. Those wicked spirits which rule the darkness of this world, and those men who are like them, he rules by constraint. The senseless and brute parts of creation by nature, and those who are like God by choice. But however it be, with or without their own choice, they all act in obedience to his will. * * * Then at least we are to acknowledge the hand of God in whatever instruments he makes use of. It makes little difference, whether he executes his purpose by the power of heaven or hell, or by the mistakes, carelessness or malice of men. * * * If bad men distress one or more of their fellow

creatures, the ungodly are a sword of his. * * * The Lord God Omnipotent still reigneth; and all things are subject unto him, that his will must be done, whether we agree to it or not."—Sermons vol. 2, pp. 525.

Clark says: "But in so complicate a system of the universe, where a multitude of particular and special, as well as general ends are to be accomplished, not only a preserving, but a specially directing power must be in continual activity. Hence the need of what we call providence, or in other words, God's plan of governing the universe, and influencing, and directing all subaltern or secondary agents, so that they may accomplish his gracious designs."—Sermons vol. 2, pp. 29.

Watson states: "The providence of God is implied in his very existence as an intelligent creator; and imports, not only an abstract foresight of all possible events, but such a predisposition of causes, and effects, such an adjustment of means and ends, as seems to us to exclude all contingency of human actions."—Dictionary, pp. 792.

Fletcher states: "God permitted, not ordered sin, because he both would and could over-rule it, to the glorious display of several of his attributes, which must otherwise have remained unknown to, and unglorified by his creatures."—Works, pp. 426.

II. We will now proceed to show that the divine control of man's actions is not in conflict with his liberty and responsibility.

1. This is evident from the experience of all good men. The experience of every good man, affords conclusive proof that God controls some men in perfect harmony with their largest rational liberty. It is under this divine controlling influence that they attain their highest moral and spiritual freedom. If he may thus control some men in perfect harmony with their moral freedom, without, in any way, destroying or impairing their liberty of action, as he evidently does; why may he not thus control all men? What is there in the nature, constitution and circumstances of other men, besides the good, to prevent the divine control of their action, without destroying their freedom? Unless it can be shown, that there is a radical difference in the natures, constitutions, and powers of men, it must be evident to every reflecting mind that whatever divine control, that is consistent with the freedom of some men, must be consistent with the freedom of all men. Experience proves that God does

govern some men in harmony with their freedom of action. It is therefore evident that he may thus control all men.

2. Men control their fellow-men in harmony with their liberty of action, as free moral agents, why may not God do it? In every family, in every home, in every community, under all forms of government, in every legislative body, in every popular assembly, men are controlled, changed, moved, acted upon by their fellow-men, without having their freedom impaired. Every man acts more or less under this influence. If man may thus control his fellow-men in harmony with their freedom, liberty and responsibility, why may not God do it? Has man more influence over men than God has? Is man able to do that which God is powerless to perform? Is that possible with man, which is impossible with God? Certainly no one will question God's ability to influence, govern, and control men without infringing their moral freedom, when they see men doing this every day, in every home and family? Men have no way of access to men that is not open to God. He has intelligence by which he can reach man's intellect, and love by which he can move man's heart; then why should man be open to influence from men, and not open to influence from God?

3. Human governments control their subjects, in their various avocations, pursuits, callings, professions, and interests in harmony with their moral liberty and responsibility; why may not the divine government do the same? Human laws, human authority, and State sovereignty and rule, are perfectly compatible with the largest rational liberty of the subjects of government. This we all feel. This every good citizen knows. This the history of the world proves. This the experience of the race confirms. Now why may not the divine government work in as perfect harmony with human liberty and responsibility as human governments do? What difficulty is there in the one case, that is not in the other? Has not God as much wisdom to adapt his government to man's nature, as man has to adapt his? Is not God as well acquainted with the nature and wants of man, as man is with the nature and wants of his fellow-men? Why then may not God govern man, without impairing his moral freedom, as easily as man does it? Certainly no rational mind can question for a moment, the ability of God to do what he admits man is doing every day.

4. We pray every day for God to govern and control men in harmony with their freedom and responsibility. When we ask God to guide and direct our fellow men in the path of duty, when we pray to him to give man a better heart, to change his purpose of wickedness, to humble his pride and elevate his affections, we certainly ask him to govern man, but we do not ask him to destroy his moral freedom and liberty of action. We never think of his doing that. We pray for him to do this in harmony with man's liberty. We expect him to do it. Do we ask God thus to govern, influence and control men without believing that he has the ability to do it?

Our daily petitions show that we feel conscious that such divine control is consistent with human freedom and responsibility. If we did not feel assured of this, we would not thus pray. Is it probable that in this conviction we are deceived and in error? This cannot be. The conviction is too strong, universal and constant in its influence to be deceptive and erroneous.

But it is urged that in thus addressing God there are always conditions either expressed or implied. If so the conditions have reference to the will, purpose, wisdom and goodness of God, and not to the state and condition of man. We never think of praying God to change man's heart if he is willing it should be changed, to awaken the sinner if he is anxious to be awakened, to make him penitent if he earnestly desires to be made penitent. No rational mind would be guilty of such folly. We ask God to bless men and give them better hearts, without any reference to their willingness to be blessed. We all understand if man is ever willing to do good, it is when God has made him willing by the influence of the divine Spirit. Are we guilty of the insincerity of asking God every day to do that which we think he has no ability to do? If not, we must admit that God can control man in perfect harmony with his moral liberty and responsibility, because we are constantly asking him to do it. There is really no conflict between God's sovereignty and man's freedom. If there was the co-existence of two beings, each endowed with liberty of action, the one infinite and the other finite, this would be impossible. But God and man do co-exist, both are free, and there is evidently no conflict between the sovereignty of God and the liberty and responsibility of man.

Suppose we are unable to see and understand, how it is that

God's controlling influence agrees with human freedom, that does not prove it is not true. There are a great many things which we know to be true, which we cannot understand. Mystery is no evidence of untruth. We cannot comprehend the mode of God's existence. Our own natures are incomprehensible to us. We do not understand the mysterious union of matter and spirit, soul and body. But we never think of calling in question our own existence and the existence of God as our Creator, because we cannot comprehend that which to man is incomprehensible. Why then should we deny the possible co-existence of God's sovereignty and man's free agency, because the manner of such co-existence is incomprehensible to us? We should expect it to be incomprehensible, because all God's relations to us are incomprehensible. Mystery cannot be separated from God's works and ways. The reason is, that the finite mind of man cannot comprehend the infinite.

8. But while the mode of the divine control of man's actions is confessedly mysterious, there are several conceivable methods in which this control may be exercised over man, without conflicting with his freedom of action.

1. It may be accomplished by direct divine influence. Matter acts upon matter, mind acts upon mind, thought acts upon thought, passion fires passion, heart moves heart, will subdues will, man influences man. May not God's Spirit thus come in contact with man's spirit, God's mind thus influence man's mind, and God's will thus control man's will. This God evidently does when he becomes the indwelling life of the good man, and why should he not in some such way check, restrain, direct, control and govern all men, by suggesting new thoughts, awakening their fears, quickening their consciences, and working in perfect harmony with their whole natures, intellectual, emotional and voluntary. Such a process of divine control would in no way conflict with man's conscious freedom of action.

2. God may thus govern man by motives. It is the nature of moral freedom to be governed by motives. It is the law of rational liberty not to act without motives. Man is influenced by motives. Motives arise from circumstances. God may arrange the circumstances, and thus by controlling the motives control the man. In this way God, by revealing his character, may address man's whole nature, and reach his will by every

avenue of approach. His holiness appeals to man's conscience, his goodness to man's gratitude, his love to man's heart, his promises of reward to man's hopes, his threats of punishment to man's fear, the grandeur of his character to man's reverence, the beauty of his character to man's love of the divinely beautiful. Does it destroy man's freedom, for his conscience to be governed by a sense of right, for his heart to be moved by love, for his gratitude to spring up under the influence of goodness, for his hopes to be awakened by promises of reward, and his fears to be quickened by threatened punishment? It certainly does not. If it did there would be no rational and moral freedom among men, for all are moved in this way.

3. God may govern man in harmony with his freedom and responsibility through human instrumentality. As he uses human agency in man's creation, preservation, education, restoration and salvation, why not in his government. All admit that God governs good men in harmony with their freedom, and if so why may he not employ the good men whom he thus governs, in the government of others? This is just what God does. He thus employed Paul, John and Peter in the apostolic age. He thus used Luther, Calvin and others in the days of the reformation. He thus employed Wesley, Whitfield and Edwards in a later age. He is now using all good men in the same way. Does it infringe a man's liberty to be influenced by the teaching, counsel, advice and example of a good man? Men are not conscious of losing their liberty when thus acting; yet this is one of the methods in which God governs men. He employs human agency in this work, and men while influenced by their fellow men are governed and controlled by God.

4. God may at times only control the act, not the agent, the volition not the will, the action not the man, man's conduct not his motives. Liberty is in the agent, not in the act, in the will not in its volitions, in the man not in his actions, in a choice of motives, not of conduct. God may control the result of man's actions, after they are performed, his volitions after they are made, and his purposes after they are determined, without interfering at all with the liberty of the agent, the freedom of the will, or the purity of man's motives. Man's free agency as a moral being consists in the voluntary action of his will, and the choice of the motives from which he will act. With these God

does not interfere so as to control them with either physical or metaphysical force. Men act as they please, or choose to act, and therefore act freely. But after they have acted, God takes hold of the effects which as causes they produce, and works out the all-wise plans of his providence.

Man's responsibility for a wrong action holds good, though God may overrule it for the promotion of his glory, the benefit of the race and the salvation of the world. This is evident, because the moral element of an action, which determines its virtuous, or vicious character, is not in its results but in the motive of the agent. If the motive is a bad motive, the act is a wicked act, let its results be what they may. Man is not responsible for the results of his actions, for they are not under his control, but for the motive from which his actions spring. He is free to act from good or bad motives, to live under holy or sinful principles, and for these he is responsible.

God may bring good out of his conduct, but that does not detract from the criminality of his acts, if he intended evil. The results of man's conduct then has nothing to do with the moral character of his acts nor with his own guilt or innocence as the responsible agent. These results may reflect glory on God's superintending providence, but no credit to guilty and wicked men.

III. We will now proceed to show that this sovereign control of man is in harmony with God's holiness.

1. God may will to overrule the sinful and criminal actions of men for good, without willing the performance of such acts, or the commission of such crimes. Just as every good government provides to turn its criminals to account by making them work for the public good, and by making their punishment an example to others, without willing that they should become criminals by the commission of the crimes for which they are punished. In this way, crime is made the occasion and punishment the means of revealing the justice of the government. Now why should the holiness of the divine government, any more than the holiness of a human government be involved with the wickedness of its subjects though God like men does in some way overrule the wickedness of the subjects of his government for good? If man does this we should expect God to do it. If man can do it without sin why may not God?

2. God may will an event without willing the occasion, that calls it forth, though the event may be inseparable from its occasion. He willed and decreed man's redemption without willing his fall. Man could not have been redeemed, had he not under temptation fell. His fall was the necessary occasion of his redemption. God purposed his salvation before his creation, but he did not purpose his sin and his fall. As a physician wills a man's restoration to health, without having purposed that he should get sick; though his being sick is the occasion of restoration. God often foresees man's sin and purposes certain results of which even man's wickedness is the necessary occasion or condition, without having any way purposed the sin that leads to it. In such cases he does not interpose to prevent the sin. He leaves man to his own way, and then causes it to work for his glory. God is under no obligation to man to prevent his sin, and neither the holiness, justice nor goodness of the divine government is involved in his failure to do it. Man has no right to complain if God leaves him to his own way, to work out the fearful punishment of his own crimes, while in his wisdom and goodness he over-rules his sins for the advancement of his own glory and for the benefit of the race. He thus made the sin of the first man and woman the occasion for the most perfect revelation of his perfections and character ever made to men or angels, and of placing the race of man in a better condition and in a more gracious relation to God than they were before man's sin. It is now man's own fault "if he does not levy a tax on his loss and rise by his fall." The sin was man's; of his own choosing; for it he is responsible; the glory of making it the occasion for the grandest display of God's love, ever made to the universe of intelligent beings, is all God's. When God thus brings good out of evil, holiness out of sin, light out of darkness, order out of confusion, wealth out of poverty, prosperity out of adversity, joy out of sorrow, and glory out of humiliation, so far is it from reflecting on his holiness, it causes it to shine forth with new luster and glory.

3. God may decree that man should perform a certain act, without decreeing that he should do it from a wicked motive. This is evident, because the same act may spring from very different motives. A government may decree that one of its officers should execute a criminal, without decreeing that he should

do it from feelings of personal revenge and hate. It is evident however, to every reflecting mind that an officer of government might be prompted by such feelings, in executing a criminal. Should he act from such a motive, he would carry out the decree of the government as effectually as though he acted from a different motive, but at the same time he would make himself a murderer in the eyes of the moral law, by the wicked motive from which he acted. The criminality of the act is in the motive; with this the government has nothing to do, it only decreed the act; for the bad motive in which is all the criminality, the agent only is responsible. The Jews carried out the purpose of God in the crucifixion of Christ, but God never decreed the motive from which they did it. This was of their own choosing. They might have offered Christ as a sacrifice to God, recognizing his divinity and Messiahship, from a desire to please God, and in obedience to Christ himself, as Abraham offered his son Isaac, and as they were in the habit of offering their animal sacrifices to God, according to the requirements of their divinely inspired ritual. Had they thus acted, they would have been guilty of no sin, though they would not more effectually have carried out the purpose of the divine government, as that purpose related to the work of atonement, than they did in crucifying him from feelings of hate and revenge. With the bad motive from which they acted, God's purpose had nothing to do; for it they only are responsible; and in it is all the sin of the whole transaction. God's holiness is not implicated, though he caused the wrath of man to praise him, and caused the wickedness of the Jews to contribute towards the development of his purpose in the salvation of the race. This principle will apply to every instance where God, in his providence, has made the sins of men subserve the ends of his government in carrying forward his great purpose of salvation. In the light of this principle, the whole system of God's government and every act of the divine administration are seen to be in perfect harmony with God's immaculate holiness and inflexible justice. God remains holy in his sovereignty, and man free and responsible in his sin.

If it be asked, if God has control of man, why it is he does not make every man holy, we would reply by asking other questions. Why did God only create man about six thousand years ago? After man's fall, why did God wait four thousand years

before he sent the Savior into the world? Why has he not sent the gospel to all nations? Why does he not prevent all sickness, pain, disease, and death? Why does he not make earth a heaven, and men angels of light? Why does he not make all men pious when they are young, instead of delaying the work till they get old, many of them? Why does he not shut the devil up in hell, so he cannot tempt men? He could certainly do that. Why does he not take all wicked men out of the world, when they will not repent, and thus prevent the curse to society from their bad example and influence? It will not be denied that he can do this. Why was he six days in making the world, when he could have called it into being by a word? All these questions are equally as pertinent and rational as the one asked by the man who does not recognize God's sovereignty over man. The answer we give to all is, we do not know. God has not told us. It is not important that we should know. If it was he would have revealed his reasons. He has not done it. We must be content to wait until he thinks proper to inform us.

A few practical inferences will close this discussion.

1. If God is sovereign we see how it is he can fulfill his promises to his people. He has assured us in his word, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Our light afflictions which are but for a moment shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He has told us that no weapon formed against us shall prosper; that he who is for us is greater than all who can be against us. It is God who is for us, who can be against us? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? Such are God's promises unto his people, and as a God who is sovereign over all the powers of heaven, earth and hell, he can make these promises good, but not otherwise. He commands all the powers and resources of the universe. Every element in nature, every angel in heaven, every devil in hell, every man upon earth is under his control. All must work for him, if all will not become willing co-workers with him. All government, all labor, all commerce, all wars, all revolutions, all national convulsions, are in the order of his providence to be over-ruled for the advancement of his cause, the good of his people and the glory of his name. Clouds and darkness are

round about him, but justice and judgment are the habitations of his throne. We may not understand the mysteries of his providence, nor comprehend the far reaching plans of his administration, but we should feel assured, that goodness prompts, holiness governs, wisdom directs, and divine power controls all for our good and God's glory. Friends may forsake us, enemies may rise up against us ; evil may overtake us ; war may desolate and lay waste our country and our homes ; our foes may murder our children, fire our dwellings, and destroy our property, but God, in his providence, is above all, under all, around all, and within all ; his knowledge foresaw all, his all-comprehending wisdom directs all, and his omnipotent power will govern all, with reference to our best interests. We should not be anxious and fearful in reference to the final result. God will work it out in his own good time. Until then, we must bow with resignation to the dark and mysterious dispensations of his providence.

2. We see in God's sovereign control of all things how he can answer our prayers. We pray for the prosperity of our country ; for the success of our cause ; for the triumph of our armies ; for victory to perch upon our banners ; for the defeat of our enemies, that their plans may be defeated, their councils confused and divided, their strength enfeebled, and their armies destroyed. These are great requests. They embrace a great deal. They imply, in the being to whom they are addressed, the possession and exercise of infinite perfections. They recognize in him the sovereign control of the universal empire of matter and mind, life and spirit. They are only reasonable because they are addressed to the great God, the universal sovereign of heaven and earth. He can answer our petitions, because he has sovereign control of the bodies and souls of men. Their thoughts and feelings, passions and purposes, words and actions, are under his direction. He can turn them as he turns the rivers of water. Then we may go to him in full assurance of faith, with unwavering confidence in his promises. The battle is not to the strong nor the race to the swift, but it is in the hands of the God of armies, nations and individuals. We may hope because "the Lord of hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob is our refuge,"

But our petitions to God for personal as well as national blessings, for protection against our spiritual as well as our political enemies, are unmeaning and foolish only as they imply in him

infinite perfections and sovereign universal control. We pray to him to make us personally holy in heart and life, to humble our pride, subdue our rebellion, to elevate our affections, to sanctify our natures, to fill us with all the fulness of God, to make us strong in the Lord and the power of his might, to sanctify us throughout soul, body and spirit, to enable us to do God's will upon earth as it is done in heaven. These are great requests. God to answer them must have control of the universe, of mind as well as the universe of matter. The pledge and the promise that they will be answered is to be found only in God's sovereignty. It is because God is sovereign over all worlds, all spirits, all intellects, all hearts, that he is able to do these great things for us. We feel assurance at the mercy-seat, and a sense of security in the hour of danger, because we feel that our God and Saviour is "Prince of the kings of the earth, the faithful and true witness, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

3. The fact that God is sovereign and that man is free, secures to us providence and moral government. If God is not sovereign, then really and practically we can have no providence. There can be no divine control of events, no divine protection of man, no special guardian care for his people, his church and his cause, if God is not sovereign over mind as well as matter. On the other hand, if man is not free there can be no moral government. Freedom and intelligence are the necessary conditions of responsibility, and responsibility is the necessary condition of moral government. If man is not free, if he cannot act as he chooses, then he is evidently not responsible for his actions, and if he is not responsible for his conduct he is not a proper subject of moral government; and there can be no moral government without proper subjects of moral control. It is thus evident that if you destroy God's sovereignty you are left without a providence, if you destroy human freedom you are left without moral government. You can only secure both, and the benefits, blessings, privileges, and immunities of both, by recognizing God as sovereign and man as free. If God's sovereignty and man's freedom is in conflict, then providence and moral government is in conflict; if sovereignty and moral liberty are mutually destructive of each other, then providence and moral government are mutually destructive the one of the other. Sovereignty and freedom

must co-exist and harmonize, or providence and moral government cannot co-exist and harmonize. With God sovereign we can have a providence without moral government, but even if we had human freedom and intelligence without God's sovereign providence, we could have no efficient moral government. There might be a moral law with its penalty, and under moral law there might be responsibility and sin, but there could be no infliction of punishment on the vicious, nor bestowal of reward upon the virtuous; because there would be no sovereign power at hand to do either. Without God's sovereign control of all things, we can have neither providence nor moral government. What God has joined together let no man put asunder. God's sovereignty and man's freedom are two grand pillars that meet in the sublime arch of the divine government, which spans the earth with its beneficent protection.



